

Barclay (Wm. F.)

SYPHILIS.

BY

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Compliments of

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Syphilis is an infectious disease that is believed to be of germ origin, but bacteriologists have as yet failed to definitely describe it. It is transmissible in its different stages. It affects the germs that enter into embryonic life, and thereby the protoplasmic development of every child who is so unfortunate as to have the spermatozoon or ovum of syphilitic progenitor or progenitors.

It is the only disease that proves alike infectious to all persons, and has affected more members of the human race than any other disease. In its course it has produced more suffering than all other maladies.

The leprous are placed beyond the pale of human society for its protection. It may be remarked that leprosy comes to its unfortunate victims without the transgression of any moral law of society. Syphilis is a much more infectious disease than leprosy, and it is believed more painful and loathsome.

The larger number of syphilitics are the subjects of their own indiscretions, and are morally censurable. Many persons afflicted by the disease are innocent of having violated any moral laws of society, and are the legitimate victims of the transgressions of others. The infectiousness of syphilis cannot be overestimated, and society is becoming very fully aware of this truth and the dangers arising from contact with the toxic germs of the disease. The great prevalence of the disease and the dangers from different means of infection have been pointed out so forcibly by the members of the medical profession that society recognizes the great danger of infection. The subject is already beyond that point where mention and discussion of it is forbidden in society and public print. It is freely discussed and measures have been adopted for the protection of the people.

The precautions now being used, and the education of the people as to the dangers arising from the presence and carelessness of those afflicted with the disease, will bring about a demand on the part of the public for its protection, that those suffering from the disease be isolated. The churches, the religious and secular press are discussing and pointing out the dangers arising from the commingling of

syphilitics in society, and will not much longer tolerate the danger.

It is impossible to point out all the means by which the toxic germs may be transmitted. The Bible used by those who affirm, the communion cup, drinking cups, bath tubs, towels, combs, surgical instruments, money, books, and many other ways through which infection might take place. Recently my attention was directed to this subject by a refusal on the part of a woman to employ a physician who gave professional care and treatment in houses of prostitution, not from a moral, but sanitary sentiment.

History does not definitely point out the origin of the disease, but enough is known of it to definitely settle its antiquity. Conjecture as to its first cause is the merest speculation. We know no more about the original germs than we do of the first causes of any other contagious or infectious disease. It is a wise philosophy that studies its entrance into the body, its action upon the economy of life, and its transmissibility to others. To one who has carefully studied syphilis it is a hydra-headed enemy of the human race, and more to be dreaded than any other disease, and perhaps more than all other maladies. To be exposed to the toxic germs of pestilential disease, is to be dreaded, and there is a chance of immunity, but not so of syphilis. No one is exempt from its poisonous effects who has not already been impressed by it. The most learned observers who have had the largest experience entertain and hold the most diversely opposite views as to its pathology and treatment. To one unacquainted with the disease the medical literature would confuse and confound the most learned and intelligent mind. The physicians and surgeons who have given the disease the largest consideration and most earnest study are unanimously of the same opinion as to its gravity. It may seem strange, but is nevertheless true, that a very limited number have attained any distinction in the care and successful treatment of syphilis.

All authorities who have written on surgery have reviewed the literature of syphilis, but have added little to it that is important, and special writers very little except that which photography has made plain in the rare lesions of the skin which characterize certain manifestations of the disease. Nothing can be more vague and misleading than the different views set forth on the subject of diagnosis. The expert opinions given as to chancroid and chancre—the former more

frequently followed by constitutional symptoms than otherwise—is calculated to create a large distrust, on the part of the unfortunate patients, in the medical profession. The opinions given by physicians and surgeons as to cures effected are alike unreliable and calculated to create distrust in the knowledge and skill of the members of the medical profession. A very large part of the members of the medical fraternity believe, and teach, that syphilis is incurable (once a syphilitic, always a syphilitic). My own observations lead me to the honest conclusion that irreparable wrong is done to the unfortunate sufferers, and that it is a stigma and shame to a learned profession, such as the medical should be, to have such persons in its membership. I believe that syphilis is curable when scientifically and judiciously treated. Any attempt to treat the disease without the necessary knowledge and skill to do so is an outrage upon suffering humanity, and very highly censurable. It is beyond the power of human knowledge and skill to prognosticate the course and manifestations in a case of syphilis, as no structure of the body is exempt from its ravages. The nervous system in recent years has seemed to afford more cases than in the past. I would remark that some methods of treatment now in use have seemed to me to be a fruitful cause of such results.

Syphilis of the nervous system is the most dangerous to the well-being of life. Reason, the senses, locomotion, sensation, are likely to be impaired or destroyed. A prompt recognition of the symptoms and a correct diagnosis, with the best treatment, is all-important to the welfare of the patient. There is less consensus of opinions by writers on syphilis than any other disease. Authorities in the past have advised that constitutional treatment should be deferred until positive symptoms of systemic poisoning were present. Recent observers advise that the treatment, local as well as constitutional, should begin as early as possible after the local manifestation or lesion is observed. It is certainly established that this course arrests the disease in the primary stage. The germs are identical in the different stages of the disease, which is positively established by the results that follow the transplantation of the virus and the syphilization of the subject inoculated. A logical reason for deferring treatment is difficult of comprehension. It has been alleged that the arrest of the progress of the disease simply defers it until a later period, but such observations are not based on sound theoretical and scientific treatment. It is an old

adage that one night spent with Venus oft requires several years with Mercury. Contact with the poison is all that is required for the inoculation of the body; an abrasion of the skin or mucous membrane facilitates the admission of the germ—first, the implantation of the toxic germs; second, their absorption into the circulation of the blood; third, their action upon the nutrition of the body. Recent observers declare that syphilis causes rapid tissue disintegration and waste of the body. Thirty-two men syphilized lost over 200 pounds in weight in the first sixty days after being poisoned. No two cases had exactly the same local and general symptoms, but all lost in weight. All had a rise in temperature at some period of the first sixty days. The lowest rise in temperature was one-half degree, and the highest was three degrees. Loss of appetite was present in all these cases. The lymphatic system was affected with glandular enlargement and tenderness, preceding manifestations on the skin and mucous membranes. It is entirely problematical as to the most dangerous phases of the disease, and beyond human wisdom and skill to prognosticate the course of the disease. Even when science and the largest experience are possible in a given case, the most unfortunate phases may arise and baffle the most skillful. The disease is so prevalent that the dangers seem not to be taken into consideration. It is transmitted in different ways, and the initial lesions are so slight that they are frequently unobserved. *Ibi irritatio ubi fluxus*, there is increased blood pressure at the point of entrance of the poison into the system. After the system is saturated the local manifestation disappears, the inguinal glands are surcharged with the poison and suppuration frequently follows; otherwise there would be nothing, in many instances, to indicate that the system had been poisoned. All diseased germs of a toxic nature first enter the circulation and act upon the normal cells.

Ptomaines and leucomaines are the result of the introduction of toxics. Pathological conditions are the result of the disturbance of the nutrition of the body. All treatment must be directed toward the destruction of the first cause of disease and the normal elimination will throw off, through the emunctories, all effete matter. A restoration of the normal conditions when treatment is instituted is *prima facie* evidence that the treatment is well directed. The prevalent opinion prevails that the suffering brought about by syphilis is mer-

ited by the transgression of the moral law of society, and that the victim justly merits the physical punishment. Society fails to sympathize with those persons who suffer from syphilis, and it may be fairly stated that this sentiment largely prevails in the medical profession. Science and humanity demand the same honest, earnest consideration from the medical profession that any other disease requires. Nothing short of the most profound knowledge, skill and sympathy for those suffering from syphilis is adequate and a just appreciation of personal responsibility. Thus far bacteriological research has failed to discover a germ that is diagnostic in syphilis. It would be a great advance in medicine if this were accomplished, and would forever put at rest the question of doubt as to correct diagnosis. It would determine the treatment and save the loss of valuable time, and in many instances avert much human suffering.

TREATMENT.

The synthetic union of several agents known to have the power to destroy the toxic germs of syphilis has been a great advance in the treatment of the disease.

If the toxic germs of syphilis are the cause of the disease, then only those agents which devitalize the germs are curative. Gold, mercury, and arsenic are known to have the best curative powers of any agents, but the great objection to their single or combined use has been their poisonous effect upon the system. Many persons were unable to take sufficiently large doses for any length of time to derive much benefit from their use. From the known poisonous effects, there is a constant dread on the part of patients, partly real, and in many instances imaginary. From the complexities in the treatment, there is a large failure on the part of physicians and surgeons to even approach a reasonable success. Iodine in different combinations modifies the disease, but it is doubtful if it ever cured a single case. In the primary and secondary stages it is positively and certainly injurious, and should never be administered. Lesions of the nervous and cutaneous systems are apparently brought about by the administration of iodine in the first and second stages of syphilis. Gold, mercury and arsenic are curative, and can be depended upon when properly administered in the different stages of the disease. Iron is properly classed amongst the curative remedies in syphilis; it is certainly in many cases a valuable adjuvant in the treatment. The tartrate of

iron and potash is beyond doubt the most valuable preparation of iron in the treatment of syphilis. A simple and useful formula is:

R Ferri et potassi tart.....
 Glycerine (pura).....aa 1 oz
 Aqua dist.ad..... 7 oz

M. Sig.: One teaspoonful before eating.

The preparation of medicine which has given the best results in the treatment of syphilis is the synthetic compound of gold, mercury, arsenic and bromine in solution—on account of brevity called Mercauro, to which I directed the attention of physicians in a short article in the *Brooklyn Medical Journal* in February, 1894. I am pleased that my observations have been verified by a very large number of the most distinguished physicians and surgeons. It is at this time a less embarrassing task to write of the use of this preparation of medicine in the treatment of syphilis than it was at that time. While I was certain in my own mind that the results were more satisfactory than I had observed from any other known medication, I realized that a modest conservatism would be more likely to cause physicians to give it a trial than a full and complete statement of the truth. I can now refer to a very large complimentary verification of my research and observation. In formulating a remedy to meet pathologic conditions we are governed entirely by the known action of medicines. All known remedies modify the action one of the other, and when combined it is by a careful and accurate observance of this law that we arrive at successful therapy. It is certain that the results in the treatment of syphilis by Mercauro are due to the compound, and cannot be attained by the administration of either of the metals when not in combination. The therapeutic application is simple, and no unpleasant effects have been observed, immediate or remote, from this treatment. The time required to bring about a modification of the symptoms and a cure of the disease would seem to place a distrust upon the permanency of the results obtained. The truth seems to rest in the statement that the fullest therapeutic effect is obtained from the toleration of the largest doses of these curative agents without unpleasant or injurious results to the system.

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